

Dental Health for your Pet

The Importance of Dental Care

Having a healthy mouth is vital to maintaining your pet's healthy, pain-free life. Dental disease is the most common disease seen in adult dogs and cats, especially older patients.

Certain breeds, particularly those with shorter mouths (brachycephalic breeds), such as Bulldogs, Pugs, Boxers, Himalayans, and Persians, can be more predisposed to developing dental issues because of crowding of their teeth.

Dental disease can cause severe pain for your pet, and oral infections can lead to kidney, heart, and liver infections if left untreated.

Clinical signs of dental disease can include decreased appetite, weight loss, drooling, or pets may lose interest in eating dry food. In many cases, the discomfort caused by dental disease can go undetected for years.

There are some basic preventative measures that can be used to help maintain a healthy mouth for your pet:

Brushing Teeth

Dogs and cats accumulate plaque and tartar on their teeth, similar to humans, and daily brushing can help limit the buildup. Although this may seem daunting, it can be easily made into an enjoyable routine for your pet. Remember always to keep it positive (i.e., give your pet their favorite treat after brushing their teeth).

Key points for brushing teeth:

- Ideally, teeth should be brushed every day for 1-2 minutes
- use a finger brush, child's toothbrush, or cloth
- only use pet toothpaste, not human toothpaste
- only the outside of the teeth need to be brushed but make sure to brush right to the back of the mouth to the molars (the tongue is a rough service that will help prevent tartar and plaque buildup on the inside the surface of the teeth)

Dental Diets

There are numerous dental diets available through veterinary clinics that can help limit dental disease in your pet. It is recommended to only use dental diets with the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) label. So long as your pet has no other health issues requiring a specific diet, these foods are a terrific idea to help prevent plaque and tartar buildup.

Note: For a product to obtain a VOHC label, it must undergo rigorous testing and be reviewed by an independent panel of experts through the American Veterinary Dental College to ensure the product has a proven ability to control tartar and/or plaque buildup. The VOHC label makes it easier for pet owners and veterinarians to distinguish which dental products will provide the most benefit to pets for controlling dental disease.





CLENZ-A-DENT PlaqueOff

Clenz-A-Dent Plaque Off Food Additive is a palatable product that can be sprinkled on wet or dry pet food once a day that helps keep teeth clean and freshens breath. It has been clinically proven to reduce plaque buildup in your pets' mouth and has the VOHC label.



Promoting Chewing

Chewing can help prevent dental disease, and various treats and toys can be used.

Recommended products:

- 'Greenies' chews, dental bones/chews
- Rawhide treats can also be used. However, caution needs to be taken to avoid choking

Not recommended:

- Bones/Antlers - these objects are as hard as your pet's teeth and can lead to abrasions and broken teeth
- Tennis balls - the abrasive surface of tennis balls can quickly wear down your pet's teeth. Other rubber balls without the 'tennis ball' surface are safe to use



Professional Dental Cleaning

Despite our best efforts to minimize dental disease in our pets, professional dental cleaning is sometimes recommended. Dental cleaning can be used either as a preventative measure to help keep your pet's teeth clean or to treat dental disease.

During a dental procedure, a general anesthetic is required. We begin with a comprehensive oral exam. The teeth are then cleaned using an ultrasonic scaler and polished. Dental X-rays are performed to evaluate for evidence of any dental disease that occurs beneath the gum line. In some cases, tooth extractions are required for severely affected teeth.



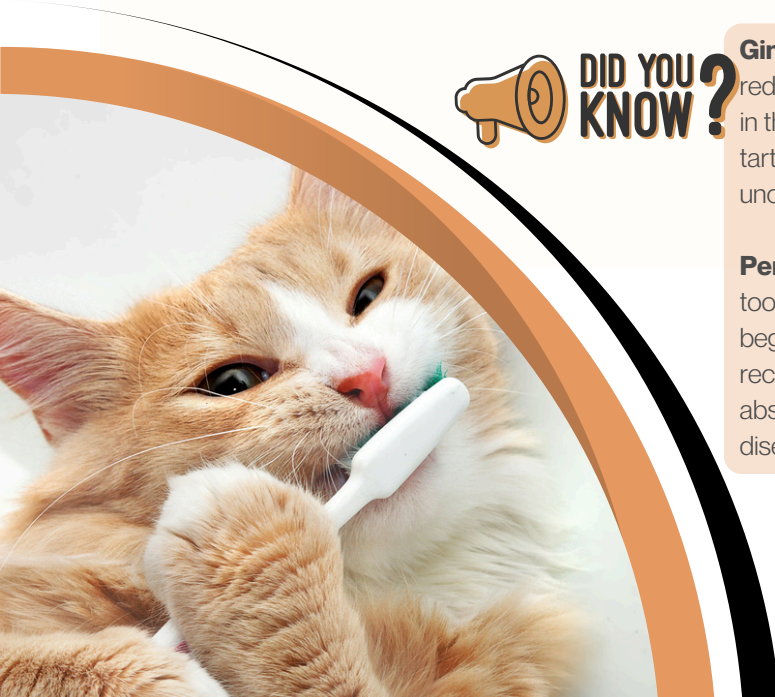
Look for the VOHC Seal on Products

VOHC exists to recognize products that meet pre-set standards of plaque and calculus (tartar) retardation in dogs and cats. Products are awarded the VOHC Seal of Acceptance following review of data from trials conducted according to VOHC protocols.



Gingivitis is an inflammation of the gums. It may be recognized as a reddening of the gumline around the teeth or a build-up of fluid (edema) in the gingival (gum) tissue. Gingivitis results from a chronic build-up of tartar and bacteria on the teeth underneath the gumline. It may be uncomfortable for your pet and may lead to periodontal disease.

Periodontal disease is an infection of the structures which secure the tooth firmly to the underlying bone. As the infection progresses, the teeth begin to loosen and may begin to fall out. The gumline often begins to recede, exposing the tooth root, which may lead to deeper infections, abscesses, and osteomyelitis (infection of the underlying bone). These diseases are more severe and require immediate veterinary attention.



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